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NEWS RELEASE

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FISH ADVISORY ISSUED FOR PRIEST LAKE

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare is issuing a fish consumption advisory for Priest Lake for pregnant women and children due to mercury levels found in lake trout. The levels of mercury in lake trout in are not high enough to pose a health threat for the general public, but could affect unborn or small children. Priest Lake is a 19-mile lake in the northern Idaho Panhandle.

“Due to the possibility that a child’s health could be affected by exposure to mercury in the womb, through breastfeeding or by eating fish, we have issued the advisory with specific recommendations,” says Chris Corwin, of the Fish Advisory Program for the Division of Health. These include:

- Women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning to become pregnant should limit lake trout they eat from Priest Lake to no more than 4 meals per month
- Children under the age of seven should not eat more than 2 meals per month of lake trout.

Mercury can accumulate in fish. By eating fish, people can absorb mercury which can affect their central nervous system. For most people, mercury from eating fish is not known to be harmful. But special care is taken with unborn and small children, whose central nervous systems are growing and maturing.

Some fish may contain methylmercury or other harmful chemicals at sufficiently high levels to be a concern. Corwin advises young children and women who are nursing, pregnant, or wanting to become pregnant to avoid eating other fish (store bought or from restaurants) if they have eaten the maximum amounts listed above. It should be noted that there also is a fish advisory for mercury in lake trout and whitefish in Lake Pend Oreille, which is near Priest Lake.

(more)

“If a pregnant woman is going to eat four meals of lake trout from Priest Lake over a month, she should not eat any other fish during that same month,” Corwin says. Some fish contain high levels of mercury and should be completely avoided by pregnant women and children. The Environmental Protection Agency or Food and Drug Administration advise pregnant women and children to avoid eating shark, swordfish, king mackerel, or tilefish, which are all saltwater fish commonly found in food stores and restaurants.

Overall, Corwin says fish are an excellent nutritional food source and vital to many people’s diets. Fish is a high-protein, low-fat food enriched with omega-3 fatty acids. “Fishing is one of the benefits of living in Idaho,” he says. “We encourage people to eat fish, but advise them to follow these precautions to avoid any health problems for unborn and small children.”

The Idaho Fish Consumption Advisory Program addresses contamination in fish statewide that may impact human health. For more information, call toll-free 1-866-240-3553.

	Pregnant or Breastfeeding Women, Women Planning to be Pregnant	Children Under 7 Years of Age	General Public
Lake Trout	Limit fish consumption to no more than 4 meals per month	Limit fish consumption to no more than 2 meals per month	No Consumption Advisory

Meal = 8 ounces of uncooked fish for men, women and children above the age of 7 and 4 ounces of uncooked fish for children under the age of 7.

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(News Editors: For more information, contact Chris Corwin, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, 208-334-5508.)